

This is not the first comprehensive book on carnivorous plants and will probably not be the last, but it certainly sets a new standard in detailed, well-presented information and stunning photographs written in an easy and entertaining style, yet with enough authority to engage the serious hobbyist and scientist.

Rogan Roth

*School of Biological and Conservation Sciences,
University of KwaZulu-Natal Pietermaritzburg,
Private Bag X01, Scottsville 3209, South Africa
E-mail address: roth@ukzn.ac.za*

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Growing Orchids In South Africa—A Gardener's Guide, Hendrik Venter, Briza Publications, South Africa, Pretoria, 2006, ISBN 10:1-875093-80-X, and 13:978-1-875093-80-9, Price: R189.00, 144 pages and numerous colour pictures, E-mail: books@briza.co.za

This book is a welcome first for South Africa. All previous information on 'how to grow orchids' in this country has appeared either as orchid society booklets or articles in recognised magazines/journals. As intimated by the title this new publication is primarily a beginners' cultural guide. This aspect is well presented by the author, demonstrating his practical experience and expertise in this field of floriculture. Further credit must include the number and quality of the colour reproductions that are all correctly orientated (printers commonly invert orchid pictures) and they are accurately identified and captioned. In addition they are evenly spread throughout the book, but most praiseworthy, they are appropriately placed adjacent to the relevant text (there is an unsatisfactory trend by publishers to keep all the coloured plates together). The look and feel of this semi-soft cover book is appealing and no beginner would be overwhelmed by its contents and dimension. The layout and design are exciting and well executed without falling into the trap of some modern trends (perhaps of younger book layout designers) of becoming over-garish.

However, the author's handling of the technical side of horticultural practice, his understanding of plant physiology and the history of orchidology should most emphatically have been checked by individuals proficient in the respective fields. The publisher is also at fault, as setting enthusiastic beginners off on the wrong foot is surely not what was intended.

For instance, in the Chapter on 'Pests and Diseases' it is suggested that thrips, aphids and scale infestations may be easily remedied by the application of the systemic insecticides Chlorpyrifos and Malathion: both may prove effective but neither are systemic (they are contact/stomachic insecticides). The reader is warned that insecticides are very harmful to health: not only do they enter through the skin, the harmful effects of inhalation

should also have been advised. Further on in the Chapter, it is stated that bacterial or fungal problems should be treated with Physan or Dursban (a trade name of Chlorpyrifos). The latter is not a fungicide but another contact/stomachic insecticide. Physan should only be used at the exact dilution recommended and over frequent use may prove harmful to certain genera such as *Phalaenopsis*. There are other more suitable fungicides available. In the Chapter on 'Feeding your Orchids' Kelpak is listed as a fertiliser but it is, in fact, a conditioner and enhancer and Trelmix is a trace element supplement and both are occasionally used in conjunction with liquid fertilisers.

In Chapter 3, 'General Growing Information', the advice on growing may have been better tackled by making a clear distinction (perhaps under subheadings) between growing outdoors and cultivation in an enclosed greenhouse: the two are sometimes confusingly mingled. In the 'Glossary of Terms', his definition of 'Genus' is ambiguous to my understanding. Under the Chapter 'The Origin of Orchids', the independent Royal Horticultural Society is incorrectly quoted as being part of Kew. In 'The History of Orchids' the statement "why orchids were so hugely expensive and commanded high prices at auctions" is somewhat misleading as certain common species were sold at nominal prices commensurate with that period. The most unacceptable mistake is made in Chapter 3 under the subheading 'Air Movement' where the processes of photosynthesis and respiration have been badly misinterpreted. A simple check would have so easily resolved the inaccuracies.

Douglas McMurtry

*Whyte Thorne, PO Box 218, Carino, 1204, South Africa
E-mail address: whytethorne@mweb.co.za*

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Flower Crops: Cultivation and Management, A.K. Singh, New India Publishing Agency, New Delhi, New India (2006), Price: \$150.00, ISBN: 81-89422-35-9, 475 pages, E-mail: newindiapublishingagency@gmail.com

This book by Dr A. K. Singh is divided into three sections. In Section 1, the avenues and scope of the floricultural industry both in India and on a global scale are reviewed. Although half a decade out of date, figures for import and export of cut flowers, potted plants and foliage for various countries give perspective to the enormity and extent of global floricultural trade. Also in this section is an insight into how the Indian government is attempting to prioritise investment into the floricultural industry by developing, upgrading and expanding on existing 'Agri export zones'.

In Section 2, the most widely grown genera in India and the world are dealt with individually. In each of the 27 Chapters, a brief background, origin and distribution, botanical and varietal descriptions are given. This is followed by optimum cultivation practices for each variety including most favourable climate, soil

characteristics, propagation, land preparation, fertilisation regimes, planting times, irrigation, use of plant growth regulators, diseases and insect pests, methods of harvesting, postharvest management and production levels.

In Section 3, some of the emerging issues in floriculture are examined. These include the sensitive matter of organic versus traditional agricultural practices and the health of floral workers, especially those involved in spraying and handling. This is a major concern because floriculture consumes more pesticides than any other agricultural sector. The use and potential of biotechnological methods such as tissue culture (somatic embryogenesis, *in vitro* mutation, protoplast fusion, somaclonal variation) and genetic transformation, in developing new varieties and improving old cultivars, are helpful and informative, but lack some depth. The penultimate Chapter deals with the impact that information technology has had on the industry from the level of production to the final consumer, and touches on the ever-growing realm of electronic trade. The final Chapter highlights how floricultural trade, with all its particular and specific

requirements that result from the nature of the final product, fits into trade on an international level.

Although the book is fully understandable, it would have benefited greatly from additional language and style editing. The 60 colour plates contain a paucity of photographs of poor quality. Much of the content is related to cultivation practices, and thus will be a versatile guide for those involved in the diverse floricultural production sector.

Glendon D. Ascough
*Research Centre for Plant Growth and Development,
School of Biological and Conservation Sciences,
University of KwaZulu-Natal Pietermaritzburg,
Private Bag X01, Scottsville 3209, South Africa
E-mail address: rcpgd@ukzn.ac.za.*

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